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SUBJECT: ANGOLA: SAMAKUVA ATTACKS GRA GOVERNING PRACTICES

11. (SBU) Summary: In a strongly worded speech during UNITA's sixth party conference, UNITA President Isaias Samakuva came out swinging. He accused President Dos Santos of usurping constitutional power, the MPLA of trying to ram through it's "Angola 2025" program as government policy and compared Angola under Dos Santos and the MPLA to the political style and leadership of Portuguese dictator and colonial ruler Antonio Salazar. The Salazar reference drew strong negative reactions from many Angolans, but others praised Samakuva for acting like an opposition leader. Samakuva's speech was most likely aimed at silencing UNITA leaders who criticized him for being too soft on the MPLA and Dos Santos and were challenging him for UNITA's leadership. The controversy generated, however, is not over the comparison made; it is proof that the MPLA is not used to hearing strong criticism of itself or its leader. End Summary. Samakuva criticizes GRA's and Dos Santos' Record

12. (U) On November 27 UNITA President Isaias Samakuva addressed the Political Commission of his party at the inauguration of its Sixth Party Conference. In his speech Samakuva accused President Dos Santos and the MPLA of usurping constitutional power from the government by ruling through presidential decree. Samakuva noted that Dos Santos had liberally established "artificial legal entities," i.e. commissions, which do not report to the Parliament to carry out many programs, thus guaranteeing the President absolute control over those projects without any opportunity for parliamentary oversight. In addition, Samakuva called on the government to combat the institutionalization of corruption and poor government management, in order to restore public confidence in government institutions.

13. (U) Samakuva noted that the MPLA was overstepping its role as a political party and instead acting as the ruling government in attempting to force the nation to adopt its party-generated agenda, "Angola 2025," as the official Angolan government program for the next 25 years. He said the MPLA is attempting to push this agenda forward with quasi-constitutional status. Referring to the one-on-one discussions Samakuva and dos Santos held in June and September of this year, Samakuva said that he had also made clear to dos Santos that as President he needed to guarantee that all Angolans benefited from peace and economic prosperity. Samakuva also directed a point at his own party as well as to the government, noting that no one should support under-the-table deals dividing political and economic power, deriding that "certain political class who feels entitled to divide power among itself." He Who Shall Not be Named

14. (U) Samakuva created the public outcry and controversy by comparing President Dos Santos' political style of leadership to that of Antonio Salazar, former Portuguese fascist dictator who also governed pre-independence colonial Angola with hard-line measures. For example, Samakuva noted the similarities between dos Santos and Salazar in dealing with opposition: whereas Salazar exiled dissenters from Portugal to the colonies, dos Santos often "rewards" his party critics with Ambassadorships or for those not as lucky, with political and economic ostracism. MPLA reaction was swift; party leaders accused Samakuva of making personal comparisons between dos Santos and Salazar in newspaper, radio, and television interviews. Official government reaction was slightly more balanced. Higino Carneiro, Minister of the Interior and Government

representative to the Bilateral Commission, accused Samakuva of offending the Office of the President of the Republic with accusations of unconstitutional conduct, and the GRA formally protested to the Bilateral Commission (Lusaka/Luena Accords) and asked UNITA to clarify its statement. Samakuva worked to clarify in later interviews that he was merely comparing leadership styles rather than equating dos Santos with a brutally repressive colonial dictator, but in the eyes of many the damage had already been done. The full content of the speech received some press coverage in the weekly independent newspapers, but the government newspaper Jornal de Angola only provided coverage of the subsequent controversy surrounding the Salazar comparison.

A Surprise even to Party Insiders

15. (SBU) UNITA spokesperson Adalberto Costa Junior told P/E chief on December 14, 2006, that Samakuva had not shown the speech to anyone in the run-up to the Party meeting, commenting that he, himself, had only seen it the hour before it was to be delivered and was surprised at the Salazar reference, knowing the reaction it would provoke. Adalberto Jr. commented that this was not Samakuva's usual procedure, as normally as spokesperson he would have been invited to review and comment on the speech days before delivery. Adalberto Jr. affectionately called Samakuva a "stubborn old guy" who knew full well what he was doing and could not have been dissuaded from taking this tact.

16. (SBU) Adalberto Junior also voiced concern that the speech might have jeopardized any future one-on-one meetings between dos Santos and Samakuva. He expressed surprise at the level of venom with which some MPLA members, including his counterpart, MPLA spokesman Norberto dos Santos "Kwata Kanawa," reacted to the speech, noting that he had never seen Kwata Kanawa lose control to that extent. However, Adalberto Jr. seconded Samakuva's criticism of the MPLA as acting as a one-party government, noting that UNITA had been denied permission to air advertisements regarding its Party Meeting on

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national radio despite having paid for the air-time. When asked about the effect of the speech on Samakuva's standing within the Party, Adalberto said that would-be candidates for UNITA President (Lukamba Gato and Abel Chivukuvuku) had enough of their own obstacles within the party that this wouldn't strengthen their candidacies. Note: Adalberto has a long-time association with Samakuva dating back to their years in exile in the early 90s in Lisbon. End Note.

17. (SBU) Comment: Samakuva's speech came as surprise to many, but it was most likely a calculated effort to show dissatisfied UNITA members that Samakuva was not soft on Dos Santos and the MPLA. The statement drowned out speculation in the opposition press that Samakuva had sold out UNITA in secret meetings with President Dos Santos. The visceral reaction to the Salazar comment is not so much a disagreement with the comparison, but a reflection that Angolans, and the MPLA in particular, are unaccustomed to hearing strong criticism of their party and/or their leader. The week following Samakuva's speech the MPLA used its party Congress to attack Samakuva for comparing the President to Salazar. Some analysts and local blogs praised Samakuva, however, for finally acting as an opposition party leader by calling attention to problems in the government and criticizing the lack of democratic process. End Comment

FERNANDEZ